

# WIC Futures Study Group (WFSG) Conference Call

Thursday, December 4, 2014

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## Introduction

The goal of the WFSG is to develop a statewide delivery system to provide effective, efficient, and high quality services to the greatest number of participants possible. The group met via conference call to discuss staffing changes at the state level, to receive a program update and discuss how to fill vacancies in the group, to discuss CPA training, and identify issues for future consideration.

The meeting was held on Thursday, December 14, 2014. The following is a report of the meeting activities.

Participants included:

Mary Beth Frideres	OurHeadsTogether, LLC	Drenda Nieman (o)	Lewis and Clark County HD
Kate Girard	DPHHS/WIC Director	Ellen Leahy (o)	Missoula County HD
Leah Steinle	DPHHS/WIC	Arwyn Welander (o)	Missoula WIC/Food Security Council
Corrine Kyler	DPHHS/WIC	Jamie Paul (o)	Butte-Silver Bow County HD
Mark Walker	DPHHS/WIC	Barb Skoyen (o)	Fort Belknap
Chris Fogelman	DPHHS/WIC	Shawn Hinz (o)	RiverStone Health
Bill Hodges	Big Horn County HD	Jill Steele (o)	Gallatin County HD
Linda Best	Deer Lodge/Beaverhead County WIC	Timber Dempewolf (o)	Dawson County HD
Danielle Golie	Hill County HD	Kate Devinoe (o)	Food Bank Network/FSC
Joe Russell	Flathead HD	Lorianne Burhop (o)	Food Bank Network/FSC
Gillian Brown	HRDC, Lewistown		

(o) = observer

The meeting was facilitated by Mary Beth Frideres of OurHeadsTogether, LLC.

## Opening Comments

Opening comments were made by Kate Girard, DPHHS WIC Director. Kate welcomed everyone to the call and thanked them for participating. After introductions, Mary Beth reviewed the agenda with the group.

## WIC Program Updates

Kate told the group about staffing changes at the state level. Joan Bowsher has retired and Kate has been chosen to be the new WIC Director. Leah Steinle has been promoted to WIC Program Vendor Manager. There is a vacancy for Kate's former position of nutritionist.

Montana WIC collaborated with the Nutrition and Physical Activity Program to offer the Breastfeeding Collaborative meeting. This meeting was held in September and provided two days of training to WIC Peer Counselors and their supervisors, as well as hospital staff who are working on going baby-friendly. This was an excellent training, Kate told the group, and the state will be offering it again next June and will be opening it up to more staff.

The state WIC team continues to work with epidemiology staff and one of them is located in the WIC office. The epidemiologists will be working on analysis of data such as smoking cessation in women, and BMI data in children. State WIC has completed a breastfeeding analysis, which was presented at the Fall training in September. They will be sending a report on this to all.

In preparation for the Spring Conference, the state WIC staff surveyed local agency staff to receive input on conferences. State staff is looking at 1 vs. 2 conferences per year, 1 location or 2, and also topics to be covered. Since EBT will probably get back on track this year, it might be best to only have one state conference and use the time to focus on EBT training. As to EBT, the state has received and is reviewing bids. They hope to have good news early next year when a contract is expected to be awarded.

The WIC program will go through a Federal audit this year. Regional WIC staff will be coming to Helena in August or September 2015 to meet with state staff and visit two local agencies. The purpose of the audit is to ascertain whether the program is meeting all of the Federal requirements.

Leah reported that cashier and manager surveys were completed this past year. The cashier survey reflected that the cashiers felt the best way to train cashiers was onsite face to face. As this is not practical, the state team has been working on an interactive online computer training that they hope will be available in the spring of 2015. They also surveyed retail managers and will be working on ways to make their job less stressful and more efficient. The survey feedback validated the decision to move to onsite monitoring once every two years.

The state staff is developing an advertising campaign for WIC outreach utilizing the Pandora music app. WIC messages will be on Pandora pages and there will be audio messages, as well. They are also going to use Facebook and put together a radio campaign for the larger cities in Montana.

Clinic monitoring is going well. There are many clinics that have moved to Tier One, which is good news for the program. The state plan has been completed and was submitted to the regional office last summer. The plan is close to receiving final approval. State WIC will start to work on the 2016 State Plan early next year.

## **WFSG Vacancies and Replacement Plan**

Kate told the group that Debbie Hedrick from RiverStone has retired, leaving a “large county” vacancy on the WFSG. Tom Mexican Cheyenne has resigned from the group. In an effort to encourage more Tribal participation, Kate has drafted a formal letter which will go out to tribal health directors, inviting them to identify a person who could serve.

Ellen Leahy reminded the group that Erin McGowan Fincham from AMPHO has surveyed the AMPHO caucuses in the past to help find potential members. Kate related that she had asked Erin for assistance but Erin said that she could only provide the list of local health officials. Ellen offered to assist the group with finding a new representative from large health departments. Shawn Hinz from RiverStone will talk with Ellen and Ellen will report back to Kate. Linda Best suggested that the representative should also be a member of MAWA.

## **CPA Training**

Kate told the group that CPA training is an area of concern. There has been a lot of turnover and new people have come into the program. There is a struggle to get qualified CPA staff. Up until now, state staff has considered each request for assistance on a case by case basis and have gone to some clinics to provide technical assistance. MAWA has identified the need for standardized CPA training and Kate agrees. Although orientation training has been outlined for locals (new form), a more intensive, hands on training is needed, perhaps over 2-3 days by bringing people to Helena, or adding extra days onto one of the state conferences. Or, quarterly webinars might work (for example).

Linda Best and Gillian Brown supported Kate and her effort to bring forth a higher level of training for CPAs. Linda said a 2-3 day intensive might be needed to address what is expected, how to document, who is a high risk client, etc. Gillian said it would be “fantastic for new people,” and suggested webinars for more seasoned staff.

Shawn Hinz told the group RiverStone uses community health workers who take an online college nutrition course. Danielle Golie talked about the rural areas where they have a hard time meeting the nutrition requirements. She wondered if there might be a way to make an exemption for rural areas. Kate said she did not think the proposed training could negate the current qualification for CPA staff, but she is open to discussing the qualification overall as RNs/RDs are hard to find in MT.

Linda Best asked if anyone has orientation or training “cheat sheets” that they would be willing to share. If so, they can send them to Kate for distribution to all.

Kate asked the group for volunteers to help think through how to proceed. Gillian Brown volunteered to assist Kate. Kate said that other members could pass the invite along to someone in their clinic who may be better able to serve on such a group.

### **WFSG – Where do we want to go? Important topics? Agenda items for the Spring Meeting?**

Mary Beth asked the group to think about where they want the study group to go in the future or important topics that should be considered at Spring Meeting. Here are the suggestions offered by the group members:

- Qualifications for CPAs
- How can we squeeze a few more dollars out of the budget for WIC?
- How can we assure that our advocacy efforts result in WIC being on the minds of our leaders in D.C.?
- How can we work with other groups and agencies with similar missions to reach people potentially eligible for WIC? Example: Food Bank Network
- Continue to look at outcome data periodically going forward
- EBT progress
- State Plan update

The group considered dates for the Spring Meeting. Kate is going to have a baby in May. Linda Best suggested that the end of March is a less hectic time of the year. Kate offered to send a survey out to solicit more specific dates after the first of the year.

Kate and Corinne discussed the issue of leftover funds at the end of the year. Only one local agency spent all of their funds this year; all of the others have leftover funds. This is a problem as the state can be penalized in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of next year if there are a lot of leftover funds. Kate encourages all local agencies to spend the money that is allocated to them. Shawn mentioned that it is hard to budget WIC when extra money comes mid-year, although this year, since more was put into the initial contract, hopefully, it will be easier to spend. Corinne agreed and said she understood how hard this can be.

Jill Steely asked if minutes of this meeting will be available. Mary Beth said yes, that she will send them to Kate for distribution and they will also be posted on the WFSG website.

At the conclusion of the meeting, several participants said that this had been a very good conference call.